



The President's Daily Brief

May 26, 1975

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~~*Top Secret*~~ 25X1

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26 May 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: DDI, D/OCI and D/NIO

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SUBJECT : Revised Lebanon Item

1. I didn't hear until this morning when I was already at the White House that the briefing appointment had been re-scheduled to 2 p.m. The delay gave us an opportunity to replace completely the Lebanon piece and late item.

2. The printed late item was removed altogether from the President's book, and I stapled the new typescript Lebanon article over the original (to preserve the map on the opposite side of the page). I also gave Brent Scowcroft a copy of the new piece.

3. The Director is aware of this rip-and-staple job. [redacted] draft arrived just before the DCI's copy was to be taken to him, so I sent a copy of the draft along with a buck slip explaining that it was substantially what we would send the President in a revised late item.

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DDI

Late Item

LEBANON

Lebanese Prime Minister Rifai and members of his predominantly military cabinet resigned today. President Franjiyah accepted their resignations but asked them to stay in office until a new cabinet can be formed. Although Franjiyah is under intense pressure to install a new government quickly, this process has often taken as long as several weeks.

The President is likely to turn again to civilian politicians in his search for a new prime minister. His gamble with a military cabinet drew intense criticism from Lebanese leftist and Muslim leaders, and was strongly opposed by the Palestinians and Syrians. Franjiyah almost certainly hopes, however, that the brief experiment with a military cabinet will at least have frightened the politicians into being more assertive and responsible in dealing with the country's deteriorating security situation.

Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam played an active role in the negotiations in Beirut that led to the resignation of Rifai. On his departure for Damascus today, he expressed confidence in President Franjiyah.

The most likely choice for prime minister is now Rashid Karami, a leftist member of parliament who served as prime minister on several occasions between 1955 and 1970. He would be acceptable to the Palestinians and to the Syrians, although not to the right-wing Christian Phalanges Party.

The scattered fighting last night in Beirut between Phalangists and radical fedayeen was the heaviest and most widespread of the current crisis. The US embassy estimates that 80 persons have been killed in the past week.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LATE ITEM

Lebanese Prime Minister Rifai and members of his predominantly military cabinet submitted their resignations today, according to early press reports. It is possible that President Franjiyah will not accept their resignations; if he does, however, he will presumably turn again to civilian politicians in an effort to find someone to form a successor government. The President almost certainly hopes that the brief experiment with a military cabinet will convince the civilians that they should be more assertive in dealing with the country's deteriorating security situation.

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LEBANON

Lebanese President Franjiyah and Prime Minister Rifai are under considerable pressure for the resignation of the new military government. A number of Muslim political figures, including leaders of both the Sunni and Shia Muslim sects and of the Druze community, met on Saturday and demanded the Prime Minister's immediate resignation. Statements by opposition leaders were relatively moderate and appeared designed not to complicate the situation any more than necessary. The Prime Minister has defended the President's decision to form a military government and has indicated that he will make a further public statement today in reply to Muslim criticism.

Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam and Syrian air force chief Jamil met with President Franjiyah on the evening of May 24. They probably delivered a message from Syrian President Asad protesting the composition of the present government. Lebanese leftist political leader Kamal Jumblatt, with whom Khaddam also talked, claims President Franjiyah told Khaddam he was ready to replace the military government if the civilian politicians can agree on a successor government willing to try to restore order.

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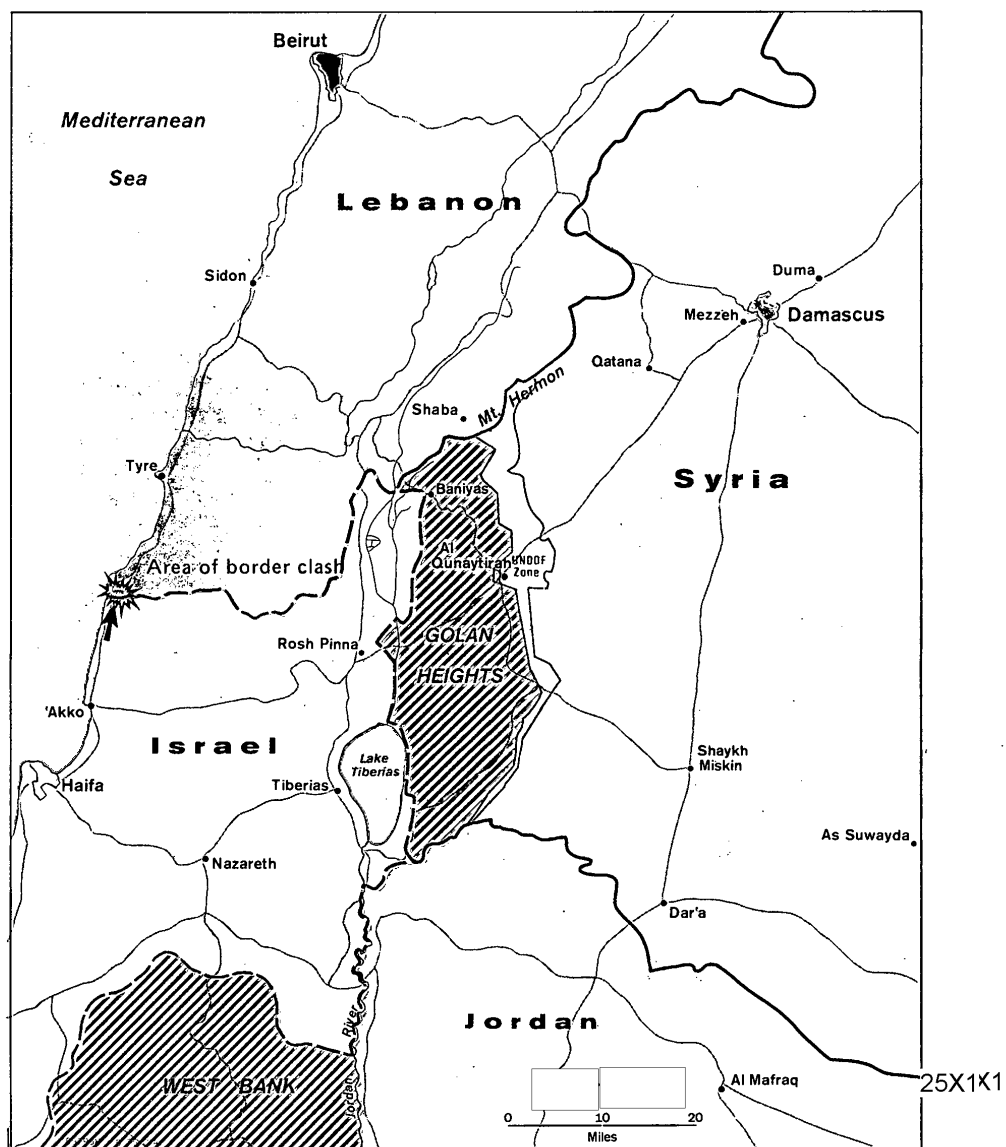
Scattered fighting continued yesterday. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] No area of Beirut is considered safe, and main avenues are barricaded. The US embassy estimates that 50 have been killed in the latest fighting.

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ISRAEL-LEBANON

Israeli and Lebanese military forces clashed yesterday near a border village some 15 miles southeast of Tyre. According to UN sources, the incident occurred when an Israeli patrol crossed the border in search of fedayeen and was fired on by Lebanese army units. Some members of the Israeli patrol reportedly were surrounded by Lebanese.

Israeli aircraft were active throughout the incident, providing air cover for the patrol and reconnaissance of the area. The Israelis bombed at least four Lebanese artillery batteries; two were said to have been destroyed.

UN forces eventually arranged a cease-fire, and the Israeli patrol was allowed to withdraw from Lebanon. At least seven Lebanese soldiers were reported killed and another eight missing. The Israelis suffered two dead and several wounded.

Lebanese forces have fired on Israeli patrols inside Lebanon in the past, but those incidents were minor. The scope of the clash yesterday appears to reflect Lebanese sensitivities arising from the current political situation in Beirut. Both sides apparently would prefer to avoid incidents of this size.

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LAOS-THAILAND

Harassment of Americans, obviously government inspired, is increasing, but no one has actually been harmed. The Lao National Radio has now announced that Pathet Lao troops will conduct an "inspection" of all American homes and installations tomorrow.

The minister of economy yesterday gave the US chargé a proposal for the return of the AID compound to US control. A meeting is planned this morning between embassy representatives and spokesmen for the government and students to discuss the proposed settlement.

Nearly 500 American dependents and other non-essential personnel left for Thailand by charter aircraft over the weekend, and more flights were scheduled. Some 348 Americans were still in Vientiane yesterday.

* * *

The Thai National Security Council, [redacted] has approved the following policy guidelines having to do with General Vang Pao and Meo refugees who have fled from Laos to Thailand:

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--Those Meo who are in no danger of reprisal from the communists will be encouraged to return to Laos.

--Efforts will be made to slow down or halt the flow of additional Meo from Laos.

--Meo who refuse to return will be resettled in Thailand if the US agrees to foot the bill and if the refugees are willing to resettle in several different areas rather than at one location.

--Vang Pao and other well-known Meo leaders will not be offered safehaven in Thailand at this time because of the "political situation" and must go elsewhere.

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The acceptance of these recommendations by Prime Minister Khukrit Pramot is by no means certain. He may will be influenced by Thai press attacks against Meo refugees and press speculation that the Thai army plans to support a Lao resistance movement.

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NORTH KOREA

Following are the key judgments of a National Intelligence Estimate on "North Korean Military Capabilities and Intentions toward South Korea" which was approved on May 22, 1975 by the US Intelligence Board. The estimate covers the period through the end of 1975.

The modernization and expansion of North Korea's armed forces in recent years have bolstered its defenses and given Pyongyang an improved and more flexible offensive capability. The North is developing this capability in order to achieve unification through military action should propitious circumstances arise. This intent has been particularly evident in the construction of tunnels in the DMZ, the development of an amphibious capability, and, more recently, in the forward positioning of armor concentrations.

The factors that have restrained Pyongyang from launching major hostilities continue to do so. These are the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, the presence of US troops, the lack of an across-the-board superiority over ROK forces, especially if they are supported by US tactical air and naval elements, and the need for support from either Moscow or Peking in a sustained, large-scale conflict.

Recent events in Indochina have probably strengthened Kim's determination to press for removal of US forces. They may also have caused him to question the US commitment to South Korea, thereby increasing the attractiveness of limited acts of force to probe American resolve. But, at least until after the General Assembly vote on the Korean issue, political considerations seem likely to be more important to him than any military move that he believes would portray North Korea as responsible for disturbing the peace of the peninsula.*

**The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, the Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy, and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force believe that these political considerations will not preclude limited but deliberate acts of force designed to probe US and ROK resolve and that such acts are likely within the period of this estimate.*

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With heightened tension on the peninsula, there is an increased prospect that small incidents, deliberate or otherwise, might escalate into conflict between naval vessels or even aircraft. This is especially likely in the waters around the Western Islands.

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JAPAN

Japan [] hopes to complete a review of its policy on international commodity agreements by July. The Japanese heretofore have generally opposed such agreements, preferring free market determination of raw material supplies and prices.

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The Ministry of Finance apparently opposes any form of commodity agreement because of the cost involved, but the ministries of foreign affairs, international trade and industry, and agriculture are willing to make some accommodations to the producing countries.

A consensus seems to be developing within the bureaucracy on several aspects of the subject:

--Agreements on a product-by-product basis are preferable to a general agreement on all commodities as proposed by the UK.

--Agreements on tropical agricultural products would be less objectionable than those on industrial raw materials such as copper.

--Payments from a multilateral agency such as the International Monetary Fund to producers whose export earnings fell below an agreed level are preferable to setting commodity floor prices.

--Negotiations should be held outside the UN or other forums dominated by the developing countries.

Consideration is being given to membership in the International Tin Council as a sign of cooperation with Malaysia, Indonesia, and other East Asian producers. Discussion is also under way on reaching a separate agreement on commodities with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore) that could serve as a model for a larger agreement. These countries are not only vital to Tokyo's economic and political interests, but are more moderate in their demands for greater control over commodity markets. No approach has been made to this organization, however, and a decision in the near future is not likely.

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NOTES

The Soviet Soyuz spacecraft, which was launched Saturday from Tyuratam, docked yesterday with the orbiting Salyut-4 space station.

The docking apparently proceeded without difficulty. If no problems develop, the two cosmonauts may remain aboard the space station for about four weeks.

* * *

Thai Prime Minister Khukrit is considering a reshuffle of his cabinet to reduce bickering within the government.

Personal animosities and competition for political influence have led to serious strains within the seven-party coalition. Khukrit has kept the two-month-old government in line chiefly by threatening to dissolve the National Assembly and call new elections--a prospect few parties either desire or can afford just now. A parliamentary challenge to Khukrit seems relatively unlikely at this time chiefly because his handling of the Mayaguez incident has so increased his prestige.

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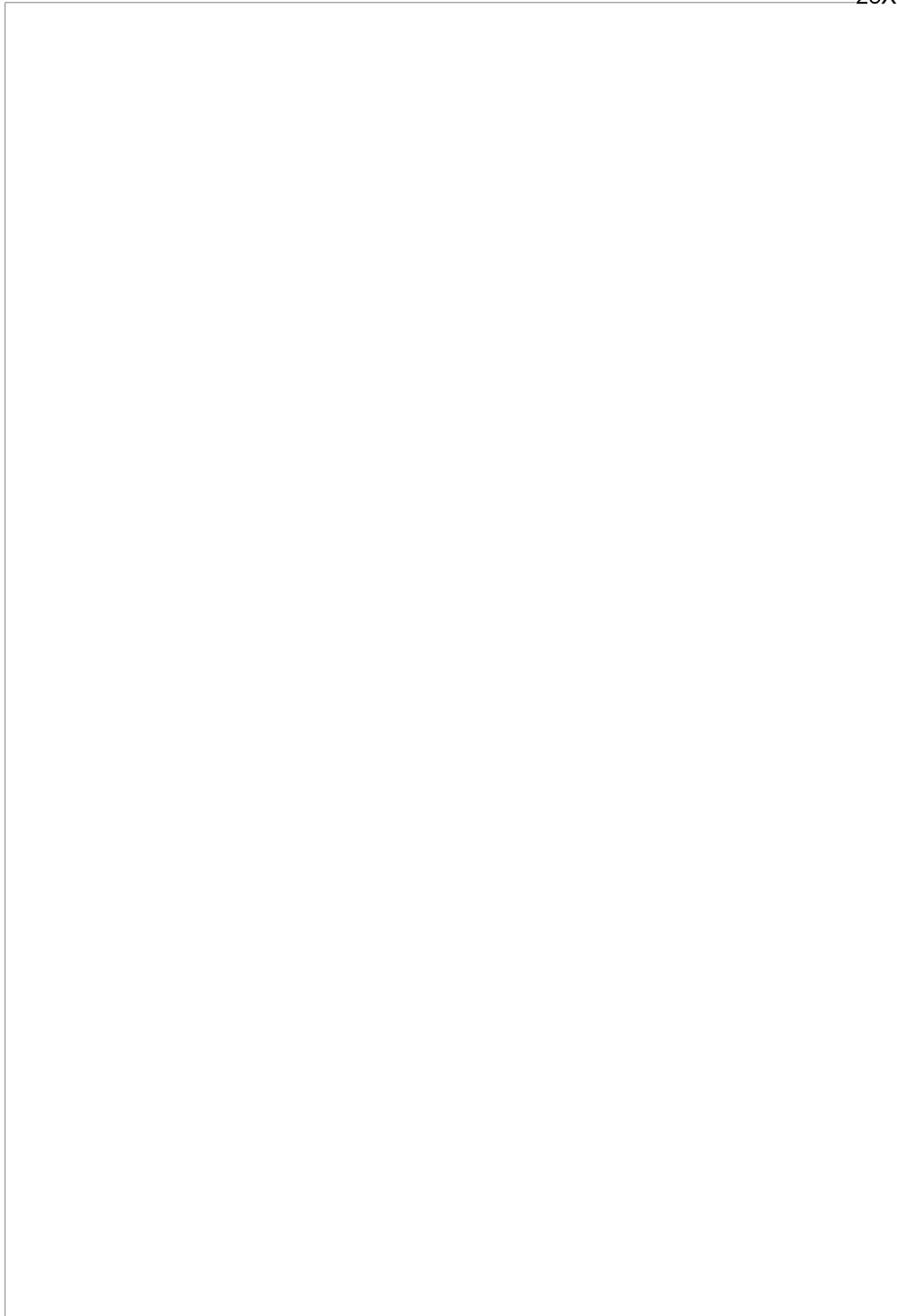
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SS-11 Modification Program

Modernization for deployment of the SS-11 [redacted]

[redacted] began in [redacted] 1973. [redacted]

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Until [redacted] 1974 the program was confined to the [redacted] easternmost SS-11 complexes [redacted]. It then was expanded to [redacted] the central and western USSR-- [redacted]. All [redacted] silos [redacted] have now been modernized.

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SS-19 Program

Silo conversion for the SS-19 began [redacted]

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[redacted] The modifications, which take about a year to complete, involve dismantling the SS-11 silo and constructing the SS-19 silo in the same excavation. [redacted] SS-19 silo better able to withstand the effects of a nuclear blast. [redacted]

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Four, and possibly five, groups of converted silos [redacted] probably contain SS-19 missiles. In addition, there are [redacted] other groups undergoing conversion [redacted]

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The Soviets [] intend to convert the SS-11 silos [] for the SS-19. []

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[] SS-11 silos [] in the SS-19 program, and it is estimated that all of them will be converted for the SS-19 by mid-1979.

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In addition to the SS-19 silos created by conversion of SS-11 silos, the Soviets have [] the SS-19 []

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[] these [] silos began in [] 1970 (the SALT ban on new silo construction did not take effect until July 1972). The first of these reached operational status in late 1973. Probably because the SS-19 was not then available for deployment, SS-11 [] missiles were installed as an interim []

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SS-X-17 Program

In [] 1974, the Soviets began conversion of SS-11 launchers [] for the SS-X-17. []

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[] The silo modifications--which include reinforcing the silo wall, building up the silo apron to lengthen the silo, and installing a new plug-type door--will require [] months to complete. []

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SS-X-17 program is limited to the [] silos [] it probably could be completed in two or three years.

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Unmodified Complex

The Soviets [] intend to convert the SS-11 silos [] for either the SS-X-17 or SS-19. []

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[] The Soviets have made similar expansions [] at [] SS-11 complexes before converting silos for the SS-X-17 or SS-19. []

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